



Geri Halliwell and Sophie Dahl (right) are said to have tried weight loss hypnotherapy, while Helen Lederer (above right) is a fan of the Gastric mind Band



Hypno-sized

The latest dieting techniques are all about controlling what's in your head, as well as what's on your plate. Here's how to lose weight through think and thin

When Sophie Dahl transformed herself from a plus-sized model to a slim-line beauty, she had a secret weapon to turn to – hypnotist Paul McKenna. “Sophie and I have been friends for years and I helped her when she wanted to lose weight,” Paul said at the time.

Lily Allen has credited hypnotist Susan Hepburn with helping her to drop two dress sizes a few years ago, and Geri Halliwell and Sarah, Duchess of York are two more high-profile names linked with hypnotherapy and dieting.

But you don't have to be an A-list star to

be fed up with trying, and failing, to shed pounds by dieting alone. A growing number of overweight Britons are now turning to mind matters in an effort to boost their self control and permanently change their relationship with food.

Paul started the trend five years ago with his book *I Can Make You Thin* and the follow-up TV series of the same name. Explaining the popularity of his technique, which includes learning four simple rules about how to eat and then employing psychological tactics to improve mind-power, he has said: “Diets have an

appallingly low success rate. People who use my system don't eat to excess because they are not out of control.”

Another more recent technique also focuses on using your subconscious to control your appetite – this time by fooling your body into believing you have had weight-loss surgery.

Developed in Spain by two English therapists, Martin and Marion Shirran, the Gastric mind Band is now available in London and New York. It uses a combination of hypnosis, cognitive behavioural therapy and guided imagery to convince patients that they have undergone gastric band surgery to help control their appetites.

Mind over matter

Comedienne Helen Lederer tried the therapy after struggling with her weight for more than two decades. “Could a virtual rubber tourniquet really replace years of unhappy and happy indulging? Well, I've lost 9lb so far and I have a reinforcing CD to listen to when I feel flaky,” she reveals.

The treatment claims to have a 74 per cent success rate, with 500 people undergoing the procedure so far. “The Gastric mind Band is actually a unique way of learning about yourself and your eating habits, unlocking the reasons behind them and understanding how they have developed,” says Martin. “It involves learning new eating habits, understanding how to make better food choices and learning how to live the rest of your life with a healthier relationship with food.”

The treatment includes hypnotherapy sessions in which you are asked to visualise a slimmer and healthier you, before the mental fitting of the gastric band – complete with the sounds and smells of a hospital. The idea is to fool your body into thinking that your stomach is restricted so that you learn to feel hunger, to eat smaller portions and control your appetite.

Hypnosis techniques have been used to perform “imagined surgery” before, but the Gastric mind Band claims to be the first time such a process has been applied to weight-loss operations. At the very least, the hypnosis is much safer than actually undergoing surgery. As Helen Lederer says: “Why risk the scalpel when your mind can do it for you?”

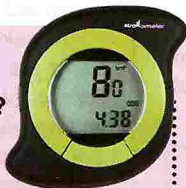
Further information

The Gastric mind Band method is available at the Benestar Centre, London, and costs £2,500 plus VAT; visit benestar.co.uk. Shirrans' Solution: The Gastric Mind Band by Martin and Marion Shirran is available from amazon.co.uk.

HEALTH NEWS

● Are you a pushy mother?

Pushy with a baby buggy, that is. If so, you have a head start on fitness. The average mother walks 750 miles a year with her pram, and now you can monitor how far you are going – and how many calories you are burning – with the Strollometer (£29.99, fit4mum.com). The clip-on device with online support helps you devise a workout to get you back in shape.



● A workout while you walk

The new FitFloP FF Supertone shock-absorbing, muscle-toning trainer has arrived. It features Microwobbleboard technology, previously only employed in FitFloP sandals and boots, to offer a secret workout for your muscles as you walk. The all-weather shoes cost £80 from fitflo.com.



● Elizabeth Hurley might be able

to afford a private chef and personal trainer, but it's good to know she still shops on the high street for her supplements (right). She later wrote on Twitter: “After weeks of greedy Mediterranean guzzling, tomorrow I start a new health regime. Just raided Holland & Barrett for diet supplies.”

